

TOP SECRET

23 September 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Morning Meeting of 23 September 1969

25X1 DD/I recalled that, when the Director testified before the CIA Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee on 16 September, Congressman Philbin asked how we can be sure the swing-wing aircraft is not a Soviet hoax. DD/I reported that they [redacted] [redacted] have concluded that it is most likely this is a genuine aircraft.

Godfrey mentioned that Soviet propaganda harassment of the Chinese is on the upswing again as evidenced by Tass output attacking the ChiCom regime but making no specific mention of Mao.

25X1 D/ONE related that the ICBM NIPP is in hand, and the Director indicated that he would like a full briefing on this matter.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Carver called attention to the Mankiewicz-Braden column in today's Washington Post.

TOP SECRET

Maury briefed on his meeting yesterday with Ken BeLieu, Dick Allen, and other assistants to Dr. Kissinger in preparation for the hearings requested by the Symington Ad Hoc Subcommittee on U. S. Agreements and Commitments Abroad. He highlighted that BeLieu proposed the creation of a task force under Ambassador McClintock and the designation of Agency censors to review testimony given in executive session with a view toward subsequent publication. He noted that they will meet again tomorrow to try to focus in on the matrix of questions and answers. Maury noted that Dr. Allen in particular expressed a need for the President to review prior to the hearings the problems created by such testimony and added that the programs in the Philippines and Laos will be considered in that order. Executive Director expressed his view that we should consider now what we will do when our role in Laos is fully advertised in the press, albeit Senator Symington's letter stated that the hearings would be conducted in executive session.

Maury noted that he has reviewed excerpts of Senator Mansfield's report on his trip to the Far East and that there was no mention of CIA.

Houston mentioned that he has received from Frank Hand DOD's position on the Cooper amendment and went on to explain that the Fulbright amendment, which would place a ceiling on military assistance/Laos, appears to cause DOD the most concern. [REDACTED]

25X1 [REDACTED]
25X1 [REDACTED] DDCI pointed to the editorial in today's Washington Post, "Waist Deep in Laos," as indicative of the problem we seek to avoid and the expectations of Senator Symington's projected hearings.

25X1 [REDACTED]
DD/S&T pointed to reportage in today's publications on preparations for another Soviet unmanned moon shot and expressed the possibility that it might be followed by a manned shot.

2 [REDACTED]
The Director briefed on a telephone call from Secretary Laird in which the latter expressed his concern over the impact of a recent NSC paper pertaining to Laos.

25X1

Approved For Release 2005/11/23 : CIA-RDP80R01284A001800120067-2

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*Frank Mankiewicz and Tom Braden***Williams to Argue That Berets' Trial Stems From Bureaucratic Rivalry**

THE TRIAL of the Green Berets accused of murder in Vietnam recalls a troubled man whose name—let us say—was Duke.

The time was shortly after World War II, and Duke, an OSS agent, was called upon by U.S. headquarters to explain why he had murdered a French girl whose name—let us say—was Marie.

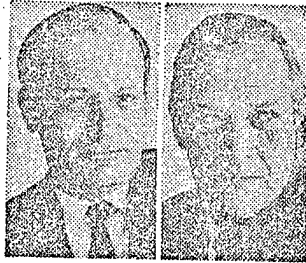
The story he told erased the most immediate of his troubles. For, as Duke explained it, it became quite clear to his superiors that he had taken the only possible course. Marie was a double agent. If she lived, an entire company of French maquis to whom Duke was assigned would die.

There are some things men do in war which—granted war—must be done. But it never seems right afterwards—as Duke found out, and as no doubt Col. Robert Rheault is now reflecting. And it is never easily explained to civilians—or, for that matter, to army officers who have never had to face those moments when the code of military conduct does not fit.

That is why Rheault's attorney hopes Defense Secretary Laird or President Nixon will call a halt to the trial. For by the time the attorney, Edward Bennett Williams, is through with his presentation, a bungled war in Vietnam will seem even more bungled, and acts which in World War II might have been regarded as excusable will seem sordid as can be.

Williams will try to show that the trial is the result of two intelligence agencies tripping over each other's toes.

A LITTLE HISTORY is in order. In late 1963, the Green Berets took over a CIA operation aimed at persuading the Montagnards to deny their hilltop villages to



Mankiewicz Braden

the Vietcong, who were using them as bases.

CIA had been providing arms to these tribesmen, who bear allegiance neither to the Vietcong nor to Saigon. For fun and profit, they were willing to defend their mountaintops against the VC.

As a military operation, the plan did not work out well. With typical army thoroughness, the Green Berets tried to persuade the Montagnards to go on the offensive—to join the war. In this the tribesmen had no interest. But they did provide the base for an intelligence operation into Cambodia, in which Col. Rheault and his men were engaged when they were suddenly arrested.

When they took over the operation, the Green Berets also took over a Vietnamese agent for the CIA. They later believed that he had "turned." In the course of their tender handling, he died.

CIA disagreed with the Green Berets' action. Whether the agency agreed or disagreed with the Green Beret assessment is not clear. But the ground rules called for the CIA station chief to be consulted. He was not.

HE WAS FURIOUS. The result of his fury will be an embarrassing public trial unless someone moves to halt it. In fact, Gen. Creighton Abrams, the U.S. commander in Vietnam, originally hoped that CIA Direc-

tor Richard Helms would do so.

Helms might have informed Abrams that a public trial would endanger secret networks and thus the national security. But Helms chose to back up his Vietnam station chief, and short of intervention from on high, the whole affair is not too big to stop.

Bureaucratic struggles between intelligence agencies are not new. During World War II, Army G-2 frequently complained about William J. Donovan's OSS. And during the Cold War, the number of agents tripping over each other's heels in Eastern Europe led to Soviet Premier Khrushchev's famous remark to the late CIA chief Allen W. Dulles, "Of course we have much in common. We read each other's reports."

But both World War II and the Cold War were popular wars. Ideology confronted ideology, and whatever the mistakes, most Americans thought it important that our side win.

Vietnam is not the same thing. A bungled war, further bungled by bureaucratic rivalry leading to a bungled murder, is not likely to be admired hot stove reading this winter.

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23 SEP 1969

Waist Deep in Laos

There ought to be no mistaking the seriousness of the American involvement in Laos, nor the importance of the proposed inquiry of Senator Symington's Foreign Relations subcommittee into it. We have reached a state of affairs where everyone in Laos and Thailand knows what is going on, so-called insiders in Washington know what is going on, but the American people do not. The truth is that the United States is waist deep in a war in Laos, and the authorities here deny it. The State Department insists that the only American military personnel in the country are the 19 members of the air attache's staff in Vientiane. But that isn't true, and we can only hope that the hearings of Senator Symington's committee will demonstrate that it isn't true.

American aircraft are now flying more sorties in Laos than they were in North Vietnam at the height of the bombing, which is some 12,500 sorties a month. To a degree, bombing in Laos has replaced the bombing in North Vietnam. American advisers, both civilian and military, are instructing Lao troops, American pilots are flying air cover, and last week a dispatch from the field disclosed that Thai troops dressed in Lao army uniforms penetrated the Plaine des Jarres. Those Thai troops were provided with heavy United States logistical and air support. The American aid program currently pumps about \$300 million a year into Laos. Senator Symington put it succinctly enough: "We have been at war in Laos for years and it is time the American people knew the facts."

The nature of Laos and the Laotians makes it an infinitely more complicated and treacherous proposition than even South Vietnam. To begin with, Laos is no country at all but a collection of diverse peoples around whom an arbitrary boundary has been drawn. The Communist Pathet Lao are only slightly less indolent than the rightist and neutralist Lao now in possession of the capital, Vientiane. That is of course a grotesque oversimplification because the overwhelming majority of Lao have no political preference at all. For what it is worth, they prefer opium. The borders are

so insecure that early this year two battalions of Chinese troops commenced to build a road from Yunnan province south 30 miles into Laos and Premier Souvanna Phouma declined to object or inquire what the Chinese intentions were because the Lao themselves had requested the construction of a road back in 1962, when relations with the Chinese were considerably warmer than they are now. What energy the local insurgents possess comes from the North Vietnamese army, whose strength in Laos is currently reported to be about 50,000 men. The North Vietnamese control the eastern half of the country, through which the Ho Chi Minh trails coil.

American military officials have long had an eye on Laos as a surrogate battleground for the war in South Vietnam. There had been some talk of a strike by land across Laos into North Vietnam, in the period when Washington officials were thinking in terms of a military solution. The undeniable presence of large numbers of North Vietnamese troops in Laos provoked the obvious question: Why not deal with them there, before they penetrated the south. Sound enough strategy, and one result is the bombing of Laos, 12,500 sorties a month.

The losers in all of this are the Lao, for whom no one cares very much. The country is now as it has been for years a battleground of contending forces of which the people are only dimly aware. The administration, or whoever is in charge of American foreign policy, ought to undertake now to tell us what is at stake, and where our interest lies. Is there now a surrogate war in Laos, and if so what are the prospects? In the argot of the Pentagon, the roles and missions of the Americans there should be defined—and the definition should go further than the patently ludicrous claim that 19 air attaches constitute the total American military force. But until that unlikely event, we will watch the Symington subcommittee's work with interest, keeping in mind of course that its findings will be of little value unless released to the public. Waist-deep today, chin-high tomorrow.